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Max Gate
Dorchester.

The sun as it shines on England falls indeed upon many a desolate home, upon shops & factories attenuated of their workers; but its rays still light up smiling valleys & fields. They strike upon no scene of desolation & destruction, no fair landscape laid utterly to waste. In France, how different!

At this moment, when the achievements of that wonderful country have filled our hearts with admiration, let us also consider how greatly she has suffered in comparison with our own land; & also how deep is our debt to France.

You are asked to give as a token of your grateful recognition of this debt – one which our people can never repay – a small sum to help the French "poilus" by affording them little comforts which they are unable to provide for themselves: such comforts as here we might be inclined to call necessities of life.

At Vertus, between Epernay & Chalons, in the Marne district, a canteen & rest-room for the French troops has been established by Mrs Henry Allhusen, who has already done much in France for the French wounded; & she is just starting another at Cire-les-Mello, near Senlis. At the canteen men are aided who are suffering from fatigue & other minor ailments sufficient to cause much discomfort, & even pain, but not bad enough for treatment at the hospitals. There is a great need for such canteens, & so far not a quarter of the number needed have been established. Coffee & bovril, biscuits & cigarettes, & other small luxuries, are provided

for

for troops going to or returning from the front. Refugees, too, have been helped & given needful repeshment & clothing. No English man or woman whose heart is not of stone, & who has the power, can refuse help to these importunate people, driven from their houses & bereft of all they once had prized.

English soldiers have also been aided from time to time at this canteen; moreover the American combatant dying far from his home has found here in English helpers gentle & devoted hands to minister to his last wants, & kind-hearted English women to follow his coffin to its grave in French soil.

But the main object of this canteen, as also of the new one, is, as shown, to help & refresh the temporarily enfeebled French soldier. By thus doing surely the band will be strengthened between the two countries, making for the brotherhood of nations, & universal peace.

Thomas Hardy.

October: 1915.